



WICKLOW Speaking Club

wicklowspeakingclub.com

A LEARNING GUIDE FROM YOUR LOCAL CLUB

20 Tips for Better Speeches & Presentations

Twenty simple, practical things that make any talk clearer, calmer and more convincing — a wedding speech, a work presentation, a job interview, or just your turn in a meeting.



Build confidence for work, life and everything in between.

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Practise these twenty tips regularly and, over time, you'll become a Confident Speaker. Your talks and presentations will engage your audience and your message will land.



Hit the target

1 Clarity of purpose

What do you want your audience to think, feel, say or do after they've heard you?

Finish this sentence before you start writing: "When I've finished speaking, my audience will..."

2 A compelling opening

Open with something that earns attention: an arresting statement, a surprising statistic, a rhetorical question or a vivid image.

First impressions last — win the room from your first line.



Get them to tune in



Everything counts

3 Dress for success

Dress appropriately for the occasion — appearance is part of your credibility.

If in doubt, lean a little smarter rather than more casual.

4 Language usage

Use simple, clear language. Avoid jargon, and never talk over your audience's heads.



Keep it simple



**Beginning · Middle ·
End**

5 Good structure

Beginning, middle, end. Tell them what you're going to tell them; tell them; then tell them what you've told them.

6 Powerful pausing

Pause to let a point land — your audience needs a moment to take things in.

“It is not the note that makes the music, but the pause between the notes.”



Give them a beat



Move with meaning

7 Use gestures

Gesture with purpose, not at random. Confident, open body language helps you connect.

Watch for nervous habits — pointing, or clicking a pen — and let them go.

8 Vary pace and pitch

Don't lurch from shouting to whispering — but do vary. A monotone sends people to sleep, fast.



Vary it, or lose them



Look and linger

9 Make eye contact

Make real eye contact so people feel included. In a small room take in everyone; in a large one, cover every part of the audience.

Look, and linger a little.

10 Using humour

Gentle, self-deprecating humour carries the least risk of causing offence. The first rule of humour is to ask whether it's appropriate.

Used well, a light touch helps people relax and engage.



Is it appropriate?



Finish on time

11 Be conscious of time

Don't ramble, and don't rush. Practise until your timing is right — good timekeeping shows respect for your audience.

12



Emotional triggers

Speak from the heart. Use facial expression, vocal variety and body language to connect emotionally — because emotions move people.

Speak from the heart

13 Ask questions

Ask questions, including rhetorical ones — they keep your audience engaged and thinking.

You won't always get a spoken answer, but people will respond, often without a word.



Keep them thinking

14 Use powerful quotes

A well-chosen quote can crystallise your point in a single line. Comedians have long joked that public speaking beats death as our number one fear — which shows how normal nerves really are.

There are only two types of speakers in the world: the nervous and the liars.

— MARK TWAIN



Say it in one line

15 It's natural to be nervous

Welcome a few nerves as a sign you're geared up to do well. Take a slow breath, exhale as you're introduced — and smile.



Breathe, then smile



Make it a story

16 Tell stories and use examples

A good story captures your audience — and they'll remember it and pass it on. Personal stories work especially well.

Examples and anecdotes make your message clear and relatable.

17 Use visual aids wisely

People remember what they see — a picture is worth a thousand words. Visual aids should enhance your message, not carry it. Don't crowd your slides with text.



Avoid death by PowerPoint

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Building confidence

Confidence is built, not born. Work on these before you stand up:



- Preparation
- Rehearsal
- Positive self-talk
- Recall past successes
- Visualise it going well
- Focus on the audience
- A solid, grounded stance
- Smile

**Say it straight****19**

Avoid words of uncertainty

Words like *I think, I hope, I guess, perhaps, maybe, try, kind of, sort of* quietly undermine you.

“I *hope* to cover...” → “I’ll cover...” “I’m going to *try* to show you...” → “I’ll show you...”

**20**

End strong

Sum up your main point in a sentence — two at most. Reconnect with how you opened, and close with a clear call to action. End on a high note.

Your last chance to shine

+

Bonus tip

Celebrate your progress. Every speech and presentation is a chance to learn and grow.

**Keep growing**



WICKLOW Speaking Club

YOU'RE VERY WELCOME

Come along to Wicklow Speaking Club

A friendly local club where people practise public speaking, presentations and everyday confidence — in a warm, supportive environment.

Come along as our guest to a meeting — book now

"I came for work presentations, but the real change is bigger than that — I speak up in meetings now. I didn't realise how much I'd been holding back."

MEMBER SINCE 2025

"I joined because I froze in a job interview and swore it would never happen again. Six months on, I interviewed for a promotion and actually enjoyed it. I got it."

MEMBER SINCE 2025



WHEN	First, third & fifth Thursdays, 8–10pm · September to June
WHERE	An Tairseach Ecology Centre, Wicklow Town, Co. Wicklow · A67 YX26
ONLINE	wicklowspeakingclub.com · facebook.com/wicklowspeakingclub

"Speech is power: speech is to persuade, to convert, to compel."

— **Ralph Waldo Emerson**